



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 9 March 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
9 MARCH 1968

1. Vietnam

Fighting has been light in South Vietnam except in northeastern Quang Tri Province, where there have been sharp clashes [REDACTED]

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In provincial and district towns in nearly all parts of South Vietnam, [REDACTED] Communist harassment is keeping the populace apprehensive and is reducing its confidence in the government. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Outside of the towns, US officials believe the Communists are consolidating their grip in broad areas. They seem to have had some success in replenishing their ranks through recruitment and impressment, and they may also have acquired large stocks of food and funds from the rural populace.

2. United Kingdom

The embassy in London has word that a week-long program of anti-US demonstrations is to begin on Monday. Targets of the demonstrations are to include British firms involved in supplying material for the US in Vietnam, as well as US companies such as Pan Am and Dow Chemical. Next Sunday, 17 March, there is to be a mass demonstration in Grosvenor Square in front of the embassy. The embassy is taking precautions.

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3. Panama

The next confrontation seems likely to come on Monday, when the assembly reconvenes to set a date for considering the impeachment charges against Robles. Arias--whose followers have not been turning out very impressively for him--reportedly is putting out a call for demonstrators to mass Monday at the assembly building. Robles has a court injunction ordering suspension of the impeachment proceedings, and his supporters in the legislature boycotted its session yesterday.

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4. Philippines

More on the question of leave in the Philippines for US servicemen

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: our embassy in Manila makes it clear that the only people being prohibited are US servicemen posted elsewhere who enter the Philippines through US bases to spend their leave on the islands. This would amount to about 1,000 men a year. The Filipinos apparently feel they must tighten their controls over US servicemen passing through as tourists. Personnel on R&R from Vietnam have special documentation and are not affected.

5. Guatemala

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6. Communist China

Chinese guards at diplomatic missions in Peking now stand their whole tour "clasping the little red book to their middle," [redacted]

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[redacted] The changing of the guard is accompanied by much waving of the book and shouting of "Long, long life to Chairman Mao!" Telephone switchboards and the time and weather girls repeat the same invocation before giving their information. [redacted]

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7. Warsaw Pact

The meeting of the pact's Political Consultative Committee in Sofia failed, as expected, to agree on the draft nonproliferation treaty. Rumania was the holdout. This is the first time the committee has had to publicize a failure to reach agreement--a sign of the pact's dwindling effectiveness as a unifying force.

8. Czechoslovakia

More groups are expressing their dissatisfaction with Novotny and the old regime. [redacted]

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Contacts of the embassy in Prague are also saying that some loosening up in Czech foreign policy can be expected over the next few months. No earthshaking changes are in prospect, but we probably will see a greater emphasis on Czech national interest, a testing of the bonds with the USSR, and a somewhat greater openness toward the West.

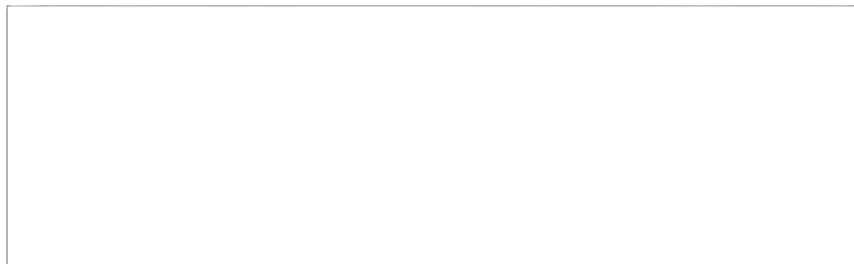
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9. Cyprus

Makarios has announced the removal of all restrictions on the movement of Turkish Cypriots. With Turks and Greeks mingling freely again, there is always the possibility that some local fight will lead to widespread communal violence.

10. Cuba-France



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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Repairs are Under Way on the Paul Doumer Bridge:
Photography of 7 February, which has just been given a detailed review in Washington, showed that dropped bridge sections on the east end of the Doumer bridge had been spanned by means of steel cables up to 500 feet long resting on intermediate supports. It can not be determined as yet if the Communists intend to repair the bridge permanently, but cables have been used previously to aid reconstruction work. The cables may be intended, however, for constructing a highway cable bridge or pedestrian walk using the bridge piers for anchorage. There are no lengthy cable bridges being used for rail traffic in North Vietnam.

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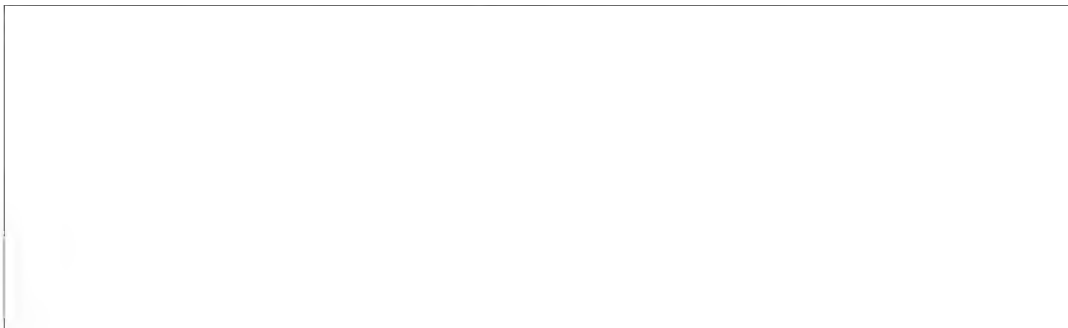
Seven spans of the 19-span, mile-long bridge are either dropped or damaged, and considerable work remains before the bridge could be opened to even limited traffic. There are 16 alternate rail and highway crossings over which traffic can move in and out of Hanoi.

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French Report on Monday's Raid on Hanoi: The Paris newspaper Le Monde carried a story this week claiming that after the air strike on Hanoi on Monday, "the Americans can no longer say that their aircraft attack only military targets." The raid on Monday, the article goes on, was aimed at a rice-hulling factory and the surrounding workers' houses. One wonders, the article concludes, "whether Washington has not decided to take a new step in escalation."

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North Vietnamese POWs: The return of the three North Vietnamese sailors seems to have hit a snag. An Indian International Control Commission (ICC) official, whose responsibilities include handling of ICC flights to Hanoi, is boggling at putting the prisoners on the flight unless there is firm assurance from Hanoi that it will receive the prisoners. He maintains the Indians would face a difficult and embarrassing situation if Hanoi refused to accept them after they arrived. The US Embassy in Saigon is pressing to get them on next Friday's flight, but doubts that the Indian objections can be overcome without a statement from Hanoi that it will accept them. The embassy suggests this will require a request from the International Red Cross in Geneva. Hanoi may refuse to

give any prior assurances of this kind, but it probably would accept the prisoners if they arrive.

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Conditions in Hanoi:

[redacted] the normal rice ration for workers in North Vietnam is 22 to 26 pounds a month, while skilled workers get more and children less. Additional rice rations sometimes are granted as incentive payments. The standard cloth ration in Hanoi is three meters a year but more is given to workers who produce more than their quotas.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

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Hanoi Reports Plans for New Demonstrations in US: On 8 March, Hanoi's international service broadcast a report on preparations for new demonstrations in the US against the war. It noted that the National Mobilization Committee had appealed for people to join in 10 days of protest beginning 12 April. The broadcast said that Students for a Democratic Society and a newly formed black antiwar group had joined the committee in issuing the appeal. A student strike, it noted, is slated for 26 April and a "unified demonstration" of the full force of the movement is to occur the following day.

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Hanoi on Antiwar Movement: On 7 March, Hanoi radio's international service carried a brief summary of antiwar activities in the US. It noted that some 1,300 young women at Smith and Wellesley were beginning fasts to protest the war, and that some faculty members and students from Amherst had joined the girls. The same item noted the trial of a US pilot who refused to train other pilots for combat in Vietnam. UPI was cited as saying that the pilot had said he would rather go to prison than take part in anything that might assist the war effort.

The same day Hanoi radio's broadcast to US servicemen in Vietnam reported that Senator Eugene McCarthy said on 3 March that the US cannot tackle its domestic programs when it persists in "wasting manpower, money, and moral energy" in Vietnam. The broadcast said that McCarthy told a Dartmouth College audience recently that we are pursuing a war we seem unable to end, and that this was causing sharp cutbacks in all key domestic programs.

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